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## Religious Population Trends in Satara District: A Detailed Demographic Analysis

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### Abstract

*This study presents a comprehensive analysis of religious demographic changes in Satara District, Maharashtra, between the Census years 2001 and 2011. By examining religion-wise population data disaggregated by gender and rural–urban residence, the study explores population growth patterns, structural shifts, urbanization trends, and sex ratio dynamics across major religious communities. The analysis reveals a moderate overall population growth of 10.88%, with Hindus remaining the dominant group, while minority communities, particularly Muslims and Christians, exhibit higher relative growth rates. Urbanization has accelerated across all religious groups, with the Jain and Christian populations showing the highest urban concentration, reflecting broader socio-economic and occupational restructuring. A notable decline in the overall sex ratio, from 1070 females per 1000 males in 2001 to 988 in 2011, highlights emerging gender imbalances, primarily within the Hindu majority population. Despite these changes, the structural religious composition of the district remains largely stable, indicating continuity alongside demographic transition. The study underscores the importance of localized demographic analysis in understanding socio-economic transformations, migration patterns, and urbanization processes, and provides critical insights for policymakers and planners in addressing population growth, gender balance, and community development.*

**Keywords:** Religion, Population, Satara, Demography.

### Introduction

Religion is a central component of India's demographic and social fabric, influencing cultural practices, economic activities, settlement patterns, and governance structures. The decennial Census of India provides a robust dataset for analyzing population distribution across religious communities, offering valuable insights into social change and demographic trends at the national, state, and district levels. While state-level analyses reveal broad patterns, district-level studies are crucial for capturing localized dynamics, as these often diverge from regional or state averages due to socio-economic, geographic, and cultural factors.

Satara District, situated in western Maharashtra, has historically been an agrarian region characterized by fertile plains, hilly terrains, and a network of rivers and streams. Over the decade from 2001 to 2011, the district witnessed significant socio-economic transformation, including infrastructural development, industrial expansion, rural-to-urban migration, and increasing educational attainment. These processes have influenced population distribution, settlement patterns, and demographic characteristics, particularly across different religious groups.

This study seeks to provide a detailed assessment of religious demographic changes in Satara District, focusing on population growth, structural shifts, urbanization, and gender dynamics. Understanding these patterns is essential not only for demographic research but also for planning social infrastructure, resource allocation, and inclusive governance. The study provides insights into how population dynamics intersect with religion, urbanization, and gender, reflecting broader processes of demographic transition and socio-economic development within the district.

### Objectives

The objectives of this study are to analyze religion-wise population distribution, examine decadal growth rates, assess rural–urban transformation, evaluate changes in sex ratios, and interpret the socio-economic implications of these demographic shifts.

### Study Region

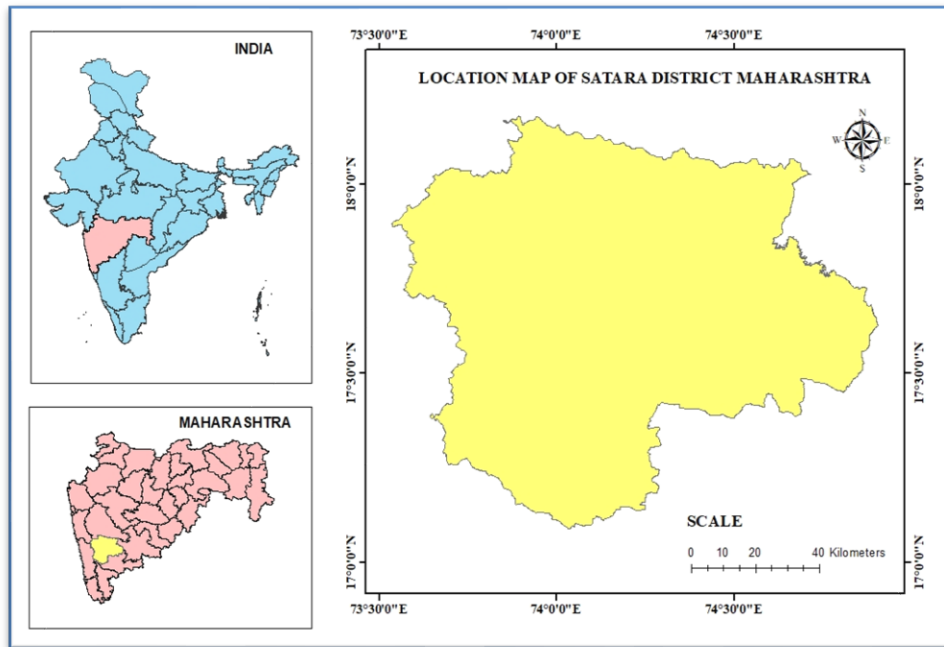
Satara District, situated in the western part of Maharashtra, India (Figure 1), covers an area of approximately 10,480 km<sup>2</sup>, lying between 17°00'N to 18°15'N latitude and 73°30'E to 75°00'E longitude. Administratively, the district is divided into eleven talukas and four revenue divisions, comprising a total of 1,721 revenue villages.

The physiography is highly diverse, including the Sahyadri mountain ranges, undulating plateaus, and fertile eastern plains, making the district particularly suitable for studies related to hydrology and drought assessment.

The region experiences a tropical monsoon climate, with the majority of rainfall occurring between June and September. Rainfall distribution is highly uneven: western areas such as Mahabaleshwar receive over 6,000 mm annually due to orographic effects, while eastern talukas including Khandala, Phaltan, Khatav, and Man receive less than 500 mm, making these areas prone to recurrent droughts. These eastern zones are officially classified as drought-prone regions.

Agriculture in Satara is largely dependent on rainfall and surface water sources, such as tanks, lakes, and reservoirs; however, the spatial distribution and dynamics of these waterbodies remain under-monitored. These climatic and physiographic characteristics make Satara District a suitable case study for geospatial drought assessment and hydrological research.

**Figure 1:** Location map of Satara District (Maharashtra).



## Methodology

The study utilizes secondary data from the Census of India (2001 and 2011), with taluka-wise population data collected for major religious groups: Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jains, Sikhs, and Others. Gender-wise and rural–urban breakdowns were also examined to understand settlement and demographic patterns.

The methodology consists of:

1. **Data Collection:** Extracting religion-wise population figures, gender distribution, and rural–urban classification from official Census reports (2001 and 2011).
2. **Data Analysis:**
  1. Absolute Change:  $\text{Absolute Change} = P_{2011} - P_{2001}$
  2. Percentage Change:  $\% \text{ Change} = (P_{2011} - P_{2001}) / P_{2001} \times 100$
  3. Population Share:  $\text{Share (\%)} = (\text{Population of religion} / \text{Total population}) \times 100$
  4. Sex Ratio Analysis:  $\text{Sex Ratio} = (\text{Number of females} / \text{Number of males}) \times 1000$
3. **Visualization:** Tables and charts were prepared to highlight trends and structural changes.
4. **Comparative Analysis:** Growth rates, sex ratios, and urbanization trends were compared across religions and talukas.

## Results

### 1. Overall Population Growth:

The total population of Satara District increased from 2,708,994 in 2001 to 3,003,741 in 2011, representing a decadal growth rate of 10.88%. This moderate growth reflects a trend toward demographic stabilization, consistent with broader patterns of demographic transition observed across Maharashtra. Compared to previous decades, which experienced higher growth rates, this slowdown suggests declining fertility levels and improving socio-economic conditions. Despite the overall population increase, the religious composition of the district remained largely stable, with no significant shifts in the proportional representation of major religious communities, indicating structural continuity over the decade.

## 2. Religious Composition and Structural Change:

**Table 1:** Religion-wise Population and Growth in Satara District (2001–2011)

Religion	2001 Population	2011 Population	Absolute Change	% Change	Share in 2011 (%)
Hindu	2,431,503	2,692,000	260,497	10.63	89.62
Muslim	125,661	146,970	21,309	16.96	4.89
Buddhist	128,570	141,315	12,745	9.91	4.70
Christian	2,300	2,700	400	17.26	0.09
Jain	9,000	9,500	500	5.38	0.32
Sikh	1,000	1,067	67	6.78	0.04
Others / Religion Not Stated	11,960	10,192	-1,768	-14.78	0.34

Table 1 presents the religion-wise population of Satara District for 2001 and 2011, along with their growth rates and proportional shares in 2011. The Hindu community, forming the overwhelming majority, increased from 2,431,503 in 2001 to 2,692,000 in 2011, reflecting an absolute growth of 260,497 persons and a growth rate of 10.63%. Despite this numerical increase, their share of the total population slightly declined to 89.62%, indicating that while Hindus remain dominant, their growth was marginally below the district average, consistent with trends of declining fertility and demographic stabilization.

The Muslim population grew from 125,661 to 146,970, an absolute increase of 21,309 and a high growth rate of 16.96%, resulting in a modest rise in their share to 4.89%. This relatively higher growth may be attributed to a younger age structure, higher fertility, and urban migration. Buddhists experienced moderate growth, increasing from 128,570 to 141,315, a growth rate of 9.91%, with their share slightly declining to 4.70%, indicating structural stability within this significant minority.

The Christian community, though numerically small, grew from 2,300 to 2,700, with a high growth rate of 17.26%, but maintained a negligible share of 0.09% due to its small base. Similarly, the Jain and Sikh populations grew modestly by 5.38% and 6.78% respectively, with shares of 0.32% and 0.04%, reflecting small but stable communities, largely concentrated in urban areas. Notably, the “Others / Religion Not Stated” category declined from 11,960 to 10,192, a negative growth rate of -14.78%, highlighting possible reclassification, assimilation into larger religious groups, or improved census enumeration. Overall, the table demonstrates that while the total population of Satara District increased, the religious composition remained largely stable, with minority communities showing relatively higher growth rates, indicating differential demographic patterns alongside structural continuity.

## 3. Rural–Urban Transformation:

**Table 2:** Urbanization Trends by Religion in 2011 (%)

Religion	Urban Population Share (%)
Hindu	22
Muslim	48
Buddhist	24
Christian	55
Jain	75

Urbanization trends were significant across all religions. Table 2 illustrates the urbanization patterns of different religious communities in Satara District in 2011. The data shows that urbanization varies significantly among religions, reflecting differences in occupational structure, socio-economic mobility, and settlement patterns.

The Jain community emerges as the most urbanized group, with 75% of its population residing in urban areas, consistent with their traditional engagement in trade, commerce, and business activities concentrated in towns and cities. Christians also exhibit a high level of urbanization, with 55% living in urban areas, indicating a shift from their historically rural settlements to towns, likely due to education, employment, and service-oriented occupations. The Muslim population shows substantial urban presence as well, with 48% residing in towns and cities, reflecting occupational diversification and migration trends. Hindus and Buddhists, although experiencing some urban growth, remain predominantly rural, with only 22% and 24%, respectively, of their populations living in urban areas, highlighting their continued reliance on agriculture and rural-based economic activities. The Sikh population demonstrates moderate urbanization at 30%, reflecting small but growing engagement in urban occupations. Overall, these trends indicate that minority communities, particularly Jains, Christians, and Muslims, are more concentrated in urban centers, while the majority Hindu and Buddhist populations continue to be largely rural, emphasizing the interplay between religion, occupation, and urban settlement patterns in the district.

#### 4. Sex Ratio and Gender Dynamics:

Table 3: Sex Ratio by Religion (Females per 1000 Males)

Religion	Sex Ratio 2001	Sex Ratio 2011
Hindu	1083	987
Muslim	965	972
Buddhist	1012	1015
Christian	1070	1095
Jain	1020	1030
Sikh	950	975

The overall sex ratio declined from 1070 in 2001 to 988 in 2011, a drop of 82 points. Table 3 presents the sex ratio by religion in Satara District for 2001 and 2011, measured as the number of females per 1,000 males. The overall trend indicates a significant decline in the district's sex ratio over the decade, primarily driven by changes within the Hindu majority. The Hindu sex ratio decreased from 1083 in 2001 to 987 in 2011, reflecting a drop of 96 points, which heavily influenced the district-wide ratio due to the community's overwhelming population share. In contrast, minority communities experienced improvements in gender balance. The Muslim sex ratio increased slightly from 965 to 972, while Buddhists improved marginally from 1012 to 1015. Christians recorded the highest sex ratio in 2011 at 1095, up from 1070, indicating a more balanced or female-dominated demographic among this small community. Similarly, Jains and Sikhs showed improvements, with sex ratios rising from 1020 to 1030 and 950 to 975, respectively. These variations suggest that while the Hindu majority is experiencing a concerning decline in female representation, minority communities are either maintaining or improving gender balance. The observed patterns may reflect differences in fertility behavior, migration, socio-economic factors, and cultural practices influencing gender composition across religious groups in the district.

Figure 2: Religious Study of Satara District (Maharashtra).



#### Discussion

The district shows clear signs of demographic transition: moderate population growth, increasing urbanization, and differential growth among religious groups. Minority communities with higher growth rates tend to have younger age structures, contributing to natural increase. Urban migration influences fertility behavior, education, and economic activity.

The declining sex ratio, particularly among Hindus, is a significant concern. Policymakers should consider gender-sensitive interventions, monitor child sex ratio trends, and assess rural-to-urban migration patterns. Urban concentration among Jains, Muslims, and Christians suggests economic specialization in trade, services, and skilled labor, which may influence local governance and resource allocation.

## Conclusion

The comparative analysis of Census 2001 and 2011 data reveals that Satara District experienced moderate population growth, increasing from 2,708,994 to 3,003,741, with a decadal growth rate of 10.88%. The Hindu community continues to dominate demographically, while minority groups such as Muslims and Christians exhibit relatively higher growth rates, reflecting differential demographic patterns across religious communities. Despite these variations, the overall religious structure remains largely stable, indicating structural continuity over the decade.

Urbanization emerges as a significant transformative factor, with the Jain, Christian, and Muslim populations concentrated in urban areas, while Hindus and Buddhists remain predominantly rural. These trends highlight the interaction between religion, occupation, and settlement patterns, reflecting broader socio-economic changes in the district.

A major demographic concern is the decline in the overall sex ratio, which fell from 1070 to 988 females per 1,000 males, primarily driven by the Hindu majority. Minority communities, including Christians, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs, generally showed improvements in gender balance. This uneven trend underscores the need for gender-sensitive interventions and targeted policy measures to address emerging social challenges.

Overall, Satara District demonstrates ongoing socio-economic transformation, marked by moderate population growth, stable religious composition, increasing urbanization, and evolving gender dynamics. These findings provide critical insights for policymakers, planners, and researchers, emphasizing the importance of localized demographic analysis for resource allocation, urban planning, and inclusive governance. Future studies incorporating age structure, literacy, fertility, and migration patterns will further enhance understanding of the district's demographic evolution and socio-economic development.

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Nil.

## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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